

Virginia Western Community College

TORNADO AWARENESS

In March of every year one day is designated as **Tornado Preparedness Day** by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

ALL STAFF, FACULTY and STUDENTS

Please take a moment to read the following information and make it a point to absorb what your actions should be, if a tornado were to touch down on or near the Virginia Western Campus.

Each year we brace ourselves for the possibility of a tornado touching down in our area. These tornados are often generated from powerful storm cells which are accompanied by heavy rain, hail and lightning. Because of this rain and lightning, a tornado funnel may be difficult to observe. Winds from a tornado may approach 300 miles per hour in a worst case scenario category F-5 on the Fujita Scale. Tornados in Virginia most often occur between the months of April and October.

How do we as a campus prepare ourselves should notifications be issued that a tornado is imminent.

TORNADO WATCH – is issued by the National Weather Service when tornadoes are possible in the area. Stay alert for approaching storms.

TORNADO WARNING - is issued when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. (This will necessitate a “Shelter-in-Place” directive being issued over the VW Emergency Alert System.)

In preparation for such an event, faculty and staff can refer to the “Virginia Western Community College Crisis Management Plan” as found on VW Connect under the Crisis Management site. This plan outlines the procedures and responsibilities, should a critical incident take place, such as a tornado.

Emergency messages related to severe weather may be broadcast over the campus wide phone system, email system, text alert system (VWAlert), campus wide television system (VWtv) and email system. **These warnings will not be accompanied by our emergency siren, as this siren is for a lockdown situation only.**

Virginia Western staff, faculty and students are asked to stay alert during tornado season. As collective members of this campus we are responsible for our actions during such an event. Please familiarize yourself with the shelter-in-place areas in each building you occupy. These locations are noted at the entrance of each classroom throughout campus.

If on the Virginia Western Campus:

Staff, faculty and students must be proactive in responding to the threat of a tornado:

- Go to the basement or to an inside hallway at the lowest building level (see Shelter-in-Place diagrams located in each classroom).
- Shelter in a windowless bathroom on a lower floor.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways, or large common areas.
- Avoid areas that contain large glass windows or doors.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

If outdoors:

- If possible, get inside a building.
- If shelter is not available or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Be aware of the potential for flooding.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

If in a car:

- Never try to out-drive a tornado in a motor vehicle. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a car or truck tossing it through the air.
- Get out of the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building.
- If there is no time to get indoors, get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle. Be aware of the potential for flooding.

If at home:

- Go at once to a windowless, interior room; storm cellar; basement; or lowest level of the building.
- If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a smaller inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Get away from the windows.
- Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.
- If in a mobile home, get out and find shelter elsewhere.

After a tornado has left the area

- Help injured or trapped persons.
- Give first aid when appropriate.

Don't try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.

- Call aloud for help and dial 911.
- Turn on radio or television to get the latest emergency information.

- Stay out of damaged buildings. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- If done safely, clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, or flammable liquids immediately. Leave the buildings if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Take pictures of the damaged areas, this will assist with future insurance claims.

***** Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance; infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Use extreme caution and be aware of downed power lines, loose and falling debris and flash flooding.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. Please keep in mind that we are all responsible for the safety of ourselves and others both on and off campus. Taking responsibility and action during a crisis creates leadership which builds to a collective strength, please be prepared and be ready.

Prepared by: Craig S. Harris, Chief of Police
Virginia Western Community College